

HORACE'S BOOK

UPON

THE ART OF POETRY.

TO THE PISOS.

IF a painter^[1] should wish to unite a horse's neck to a human head, and spread a variety of plumage over limbs [of different animals] taken from every part [of nature],^[2] so that what is a beautiful woman in the upper part terminates unsightly in an ugly fish below; could you, my friends, refrain from laughter, were you admitted to such a sight? Believe, ye Pisos, the book will be perfectly like such a picture, the ideas of which, like a sick man's dreams, are all vain and fictitious: so that neither head nor foot can correspond to any one form. "Poets and painters [you will say] have ever had equal authority for attempting any thing." We are conscious of this, and this privilege we demand and allow in turn: but not to such a degree, that the tame should associate with the savage; nor that serpents should be coupled with birds, lambs with tigers.

In pompous introductions,^[3] and such as promise a great deal, it generally happens that one or two verses of purple patch-work, that may make a great show, are tagged on; as when the grove and the altar of Diana and the meandering of a current hastening through pleasant fields, or the river Rhine, or the rainbow is described. But here there was no room for these [fine things]: perhaps, too, you know how to draw a cypress:^[4] but what is that to the purpose, if he, who is painted for the given price, is [to be represented as] swimming hopeless out of a shipwreck? A large vase at first was designed: why, as the wheel revolves, turns out a little pitcher? In a word, be your subject what it will, let it be merely simple and uniform.

The great majority of us poets, father, and youths worthy such a father, are misled by the appearance of right. I labor to be concise, I become obscure: nerves and spirit fail him, that aims at the easy: one, that pretends to be sublime, proves bombastical: he who is too cautious and fearful of the storm, crawls along the ground: he who wants to vary his subject in a marvelous manner,^[5] paints the dolphin in the woods, the boar in the sea. The avoiding of an error leads to a fault, if it lack skill.

A statuary about the Æmilian school shall of himself, with singular skill,^[6] both express the nails, and imitate in brass the flexible hair; unhappy yet in the main, because he knows not how to finish a complete piece. I would no more choose to be such a one as this, had I a mind to compose

any thing, than to live with a distorted nose, [though] remarkable for black eyes and jetty hair.

Ye who write, make choice of a subject suitable to your abilities; and revolve in your thoughts a considerable time what your strength^[7] declines, and what it is able to support. Neither elegance of style, nor a perspicuous disposition, shall desert the man, by whom the subject matter is chosen judiciously. This, or I am mistaken, will constitute the merit and beauty of arrangement, that the poet just now say what ought just now to be said, put off most of his thoughts, and waive them for the present.

In the choice of his words, too, the author of the projected poem must be delicate and cautious, he must embrace one and reject another: you will express yourself eminently well, if a dexterous combination should give an air of novelty to a well-known word. If it happen to be necessary to explain some abstruse subjects by new invented terms; it will follow that you must frame words never heard of by the old-fashioned^[8] Cethegi: and the license will be granted, if modestly used: and the new and lately-formed words will have authority, if they descend from a Greek source, with a slight deviation. But why should the Romans grant to Plutus and Cæcilius a privilege denied to Virgil and Varius? Why should I be envied, if I have it in my power to acquire a few words, when the language of Cato and Ennius has enriched our native tongue, and produced new names of things? It has been, and ever will be, allowable to coin a word marked

with the stamp in present request. As leaves in the woods are changed with the fleeting years; the earliest fall off first: in this manner words perish with old age, and those lately invented nourish and thrive, like men in the time of youth. We, and our works, are doomed to death: Whether Neptune, [9] admitted into the continent, defends our fleet from the north winds, a kingly work; or the lake, for a long time unfertile and fit for oars, now maintains its neighboring cities and feels the heavy plow; or the river, taught to run in a more convenient channel, has changed its course which was so destructive [10] to the fruits. Mortal works must perish: much less can the honor and elegance of language be long-lived. Many words shall revive, [11] which now have fallen off; and many which are now in esteem shall fall off, if it be the will of custom, in whose power is the decision and right and standard of language.

Homer has instructed us in what measure the achievements [12] of kings, and chiefs, and direful war might be written.

Plaintive strains originally were appropriated to the unequal numbers [of the elegiac]: [13] afterward [love and] successful desires were included. Yet what author first published humble [14] elegies, the critics dispute, and the controversy still waits the determination of a judge. Rage armed Archilochus with the iambic of his own invention. The sock and the majestic buskin assumed this measure as adapted

for dialogue, and to silence the noise of the populace, and calculated for action.

To celebrate gods, and the sons of gods, and the victorious wrestler, and the steed foremost in the race, and the inclination of youths, and the free joys of wine, the muse has allotted to the lyre.

If I am incapable and unskillful to observe the distinction described, and the complexions of works [of genius], why am I accosted by the name of “Poet?” Why, out of false modesty, do I prefer being ignorant to being learned?

A comic subject will not be handled in tragic verse:^[15] in like manner the banquet of Thyestes will not bear to be held in familiar verses, and such as almost suit the sock. Let each peculiar species [of writing] fill with decorum its proper place. Nevertheless sometimes even comedy exalts her voice, and passionate Chremes rails in a tumid strain: and a tragic writer generally expresses grief in a prosaic style. Telephus and Peleus, when they are both in poverty and exile, throw aside their rants and gigantic expressions if they have a mind to move the heart of the spectator with their complaint.

It is not enough that poems be beautiful;^[16] let them be tender and affecting, and bear away the soul of the auditor whithersoever they please. As the human countenance smiles on those that smile, so does it sympathize with those

that weep. If you would have me weep you must first express the passion of grief yourself; then, Telephus or Peleus, your misfortunes hurt me: if you pronounce the parts assigned you ill, I shall either fall asleep or laugh.

Pathetic accents suit a melancholy countenance; words full of menace, an angry one; wanton expressions, a sportive look; and serious matter, an austere one. For nature forms us first within to every modification of circumstances; she delights or impels us to anger, or depresses us to the earth and afflicts us with heavy sorrow: then expresses those emotions of the mind by the tongue, its interpreter. If the words be discordant to the station of the speaker, the Roman knights and plebians will raise an immoderate laugh. It will make a wide difference, whether it be Davus that speaks, or a hero; a man well-stricken in years, or a hot young fellow in his bloom; and a matron of distinction, or an officious nurse; a roaming merchant, or the cultivator of a verdant little farm; a Colchian, or an Assyrian; one educated at Thebes, or one at Argos.

You, that write, either follow tradition,^[17] or invent such fables as are congruous to themselves. If as poet you have to represent the renowned Achilles; let him be indefatigable, wrathful, inexorable, courageous, let him deny that laws were made for him, let him arrogate every thing to force of arms. Let Medea be fierce and untractable, Ino an object of pity, Ixion perfidious, Io wandering, Orestes in distress.

If you offer to the stage any thing unattempted, and venture to form a new character; let it be preserved to the last^[18] such as it set out at the beginning, and be consistent with itself. It is difficult to write with propriety^[19] on subjects to which all writers have a common claim; and you with more prudence will reduce the Iliad into acts, than if you first introduce arguments unknown and never treated of before. A public story will become your own property,^[20] if you do not dwell upon the whole circle of events, which is paltry and open to every one; nor must you be so faithful a translator, as to take the pains of rendering [the original] word for word; nor by imitating throw yourself into straits, whence either shame or the rules of your work may forbid you to retreat. Nor must you make such an exordium, as the Cyclic^[21] writer of old: “I will sing the fate of Priam, and the noble war.” What will this boaster produce worthy of all this gaping? The mountains are in labor, a ridiculous mouse will be brought forth. How much more to the purpose he, who attempts nothing improperly? “Sing for me, my muse, the man who, after the time of the destruction of Troy, surveyed the manners and cities of many men.” He meditates not [to produce] smoke from a flash, but out of smoke to elicit fire, that he may thence bring forth his instances of the marvelous with beauty, [such as] Antiphates, Scylla, the Cyclops, and Charybdis. Nor does he date Diomedes’s return from Meleager’s death, nor trace the rise of the Trojan war from [Leda’s] eggs: he always hastens on to the event; and hurries away his reader in the

midst of interesting circumstances, no otherwise than as if they were [already] known; and what he despairs of, as to receiving a polish from his touch, he omits; and in such a manner forms his fictions, so intermingles the false with the true, that the middle is not inconsistent with the beginning, nor the end with the middle.

Do you attend to what I, and the public in my opinion, expect from you [as a dramatic writer]. If you are desirous of an applauding spectator, who will wait for [the falling of] the curtain, and till the chorus calls out “your plaudits;” the manners of every age must be marked by you, and a proper decorum assigned to men’s varying dispositions and years. The boy, who is just able to pronounce his words, and prints the ground with a firm tread, delights to play with his fellows, and contracts and lays aside anger without reason, and is subject to change every hour. The beardless youth, his guardian being at length discharged, joys in horses, and dogs, and the verdure of the sunny Campus Martius; pliable as wax to the bent of vice, rough to advisers, a slow provider of useful things, prodigal of his money, high-spirited, and amorous, and hasty in deserting the objects of his passion. [After this,] our inclinations being changed, the age and spirit of manhood seeks after wealth, and [high] connections, is subservient to points of honor; and is cautious of committing any action, which he would subsequently be industrious to correct. Many inconveniences encompass a man in years; either because he seeks [eagerly] for gain,^[22] and abstains from what he

has gotten, and is afraid to make use of it; or because he transacts every thing in a timorous and dispassionate manner, dilatory, slow in hope, remiss, and greedy of futurity. Peevish, querulous, a panegyrist of former times when he was a boy, a chastiser and censurer of his juniors. Our advancing years^[23] bring many advantages along with them. Many our declining ones take away. That the parts [therefore] belonging to age may not be given to youth, and those of a man to a boy, we must dwell upon those qualities which are joined and adapted to each person's age.^[24]

An action is either represented on the stage, or being done elsewhere is there related. The things which enter by the ear affect the mind more languidly, than such as are submitted to the faithful eyes, and what a spectator presents to himself. You must not, however, bring upon the stage things fit only to be acted behind the scenes: and you must take away from view many actions, which elegant description^[25] may soon after deliver in presence [of the spectators]. Let not Medea murder her sons before the people; nor the execrable Atreus openly dress human entrails: nor let Progne be metamorphosed into a bird, Cadmus into a serpent. Whatever you show to me in this manner, not able to give credit to, I detest. Let a play which would be inquired after, and though seen, represented anew, be neither shorter nor longer than the fifth act. Neither let a god interfere, unless a difficulty worthy a god's unraveling should happen; nor let a fourth person be officious to speak.^[26]

Let the chorus^[27] sustain the part and manly^[28] character of an actor: nor let them sing any thing between the acts which is not conducive to, and fitly coherent with, the main design. Let them both patronize the good,^[29] and give them friendly advice, and regulate the passionate, and love to appease those who swell [with rage]:^[30] let them praise the repast of a short meal, and salutary effects of justice, laws, and peace with her open gates; let them conceal what is told to them in confidence,^[31] and supplicate and implore the gods that prosperity may return to the wretched, and abandon the haughty. The flute,^[32] (not as now, begirt with brass and emulous of the trumpet, but) slender and of simple form, with few stops, was of service to accompany and assist the chorus, and with its tone was sufficient to fill the rows that were not as yet too crowded, where an audience, easily numbered, as being small and sober, chaste and modest, met together. But when the victorious Romans began to extend their territories, and an ampler wall encompassed the city, and their genius was indulged on festivals by drinking wine in the day-time without censure; a greater freedom arose both, to the numbers [of poetry], and the measure [of music].^[33] For what taste could an unlettered clown and one just dismissed from labors have, when in company with the polite; the base, with the man of honor? Thus the musician added^[34] new movements and a luxuriance to the ancient art, and strutting backward and forward, drew a length of train over the stage; thus likewise new notes were added to the severity of the lyre, and

precipitate eloquence produced an unusual language [in the theater]: and the sentiments [of the chorus, then] expert in teaching useful things and prescient of futurity, differ hardly from the oracular Delphi.^[35]

The poet, who first tried his skill in tragic verse for the paltry [prize of a] goat, soon after exposed to view wild satyrs naked,^[36] and attempted raillery with severity, still preserving the gravity [of tragedy]: because the spectator on festivals, when heated with wine^[37] and disorderly, was to be amused with captivating shows and agreeable novelty. But it will be expedient so to recommend the bantering, so the rallying satyrs, so to turn earnest into jest; that none who shall be exhibited as a god, none who is introduced as a hero lately^[38] conspicuous in regal purple and gold, may deviate into the low style of obscure, mechanical shops; or, [on the contrary,] while he avoids the ground, effect cloudy mist and empty jargon. Tragedy^[39] disdaining to prate forth trivial verses, like a matron commanded to dance on the festival days,^[40] will assume an air of modesty, even in the midst of wanton satyrs. As a writer of satire, ye Pisos, I shall never be fond of unornamented and reigning terms:^[41] nor shall I labor to differ so widely from the complexion of tragedy, as to make no distinction, whether Davus be the speaker. And the bold Pythias, who gained a talent by gulling Simo; or Silenus, the guardian and attendant of his pupil-god [Bacchus]. I would so execute a fiction^[42] taken from a well-known story, that any body might entertain

hopes of doing the same thing; but, on trial, should sweat and labor in vain. Such power has a just arrangement and connection of the parts: such grace may be added to subjects merely common. In my judgment the Fauns, that are brought out of the woods, should not be too gamesome with their tender strains, as if they were educated in the city, and almost at the bar; nor, on the other hand; should blunder out their obscene and scandalous speeches. For [at such stuff] all are offended, who have a horse,^[43] a father, or an estate: nor will they receive with approbation, nor give the laurel crown, as the purchasers of parched peas and nuts are delighted with.

A long syllable put after a short one is termed an iambus, a lively measure, whence also it commanded the name of trimeters to be added to iambics, though it yielded six beats of time, being similar to itself from first to last. Not long ago, that it might come somewhat slower and with more majesty to the ear, it obligingly and contentedly admitted into its paternal heritage the steadfast spondees; agreeing however, by social league, that it was not to depart from the second^[44] and fourth place. But this [kind of measure] rarely makes its appearance in the notable^[45] trimeters of Accius, and brands the verse of Ennius brought upon the stage with a clumsy weight of spondees, with the imputation of being too precipitate and careless, or disgracefully accuses him of ignorance in his art.

It is not every judge that discerns inharmonious verses, and an undeserved indulgence is [in this case] granted to the Roman poets. But shall I on this account run riot and write licentiously? Or should not I rather suppose, that all the world are to see my faults; secure, and cautious [never to err] but with hope of being pardoned? Though, perhaps, I have merited no praise, I have escaped censure.

Ye [who are desirous to excel,] turn over the Grecian models by night, turn them by day. But our ancestors commended both the numbers of Plautus, and his strokes of pleasantry; too tamely, I will not say foolishly, admiring each of them; if you and I but know how to distinguish a coarse joke from a smart repartee, and understand the proper cadence, by [using] our fingers and ears.

Thespis^[46] is said to have invented a new kind of tragedy, and to have carried his pieces about in carts, which [certain strollers], who had their faces besmeared with lees of wine, sang and acted. After him Æschylus, the inventor of the vizard mask and decent robe, laid the stage over with boards of a tolerable size, and taught to speak in lofty tone, and strut in the buskin. To these succeeded the old comedy, not without considerable praise: but its personal freedom degenerated into excess and violence, worthy to be regulated by law; a law was made accordingly, and the chorus, the right of abusing being taken away, disgracefully became silent.

Our poets have left no species [of the art] unattempted; nor have those of them merited the least honor, who dared to forsake the footsteps of the Greeks, and celebrate domestic facts; whether they have instructed us in tragedy, of comedy.^[47] Nor would Italy be raised higher by valor

and feats of arms, than by its language, did not the fatigue and tediousness of using the file disgust every one of our poets. Do you, the descendants of Pompilius, reject that poem, which many days and many a blot have not ten times subdued to the most perfect accuracy. Because Democritus believes that genius is more successful than wretched art, and excludes from Helicon all poets who are in their senses, a great number do not care to part with their nails or beard, frequent places of solitude, shun the baths. For he will acquire, [he thinks,] the esteem and title of a poet, if he neither submits his head, which is not to be cured by even three Anticyras, to Licinius the barber. What an unlucky fellow am I, who am purged for the bile in spring-time! Else nobody would compose better poems; but the purchase is not worth the expense. Therefore I will serve instead of a whetstone, which though not able of itself to cut, can make steel sharp: so I, who can write no poetry myself, will teach the duty and business [of an author]; whence he may be stocked with rich materials; what nourishes and forms the poet; what gives grace, what not; what is the tendency of excellence, what that of error.

To have good sense, is the first principle and fountain of writing well. The Socratic papers will direct you in the choice of your subjects; and words will spontaneously accompany the subject, when it is well conceived. He who has learned what he owes to his country, and what to his friends; with what affection a parent, a brother, and a stranger, are to be loved; what is the duty of a senator, what of a judge; what the duties of a general sent out to war; he, [I say,] certainly knows how to give suitable attributes to every character. I should direct the learned imitator to have a regard to the mode of nature and manners, and thence draw his expressions to the life. Sometimes a play, that is showy with

common-places, and where the manners are well marked, though of no elegance, without force or art, gives the people much higher delight and more effectually commands their attention, than verse void of matter, and tuneful trifles.

To the Greeks, covetous of nothing but praise, the muse gave genius; to the Greeks the power of expressing themselves in round periods. The Roman youth learn by long computation to subdivide a pound into an hundred parts. Let the son of Albinus tell me, if from five ounces one be subtracted, what remains? He would have said the third of a pound.—Bravely done! you will be able to take care of your own affairs. An ounce is added: what will that be? Half a pound. When this sordid rust and hankering after wealth has once tainted their minds, can we expect that such

verses should be made as are worthy of being anointed with the oil of cedar, and kept in the well-polished cypress?

Poets wish either to profit or to delight; or to deliver at once both the pleasures and the necessities of life. Whatever precepts you give, be concise; that docile minds may soon comprehend what is said, and faithfully retain it. All superfluous instructions flow from the too full memory. Let what ever is imagined for the sake of entertainment, have as much likeness to truth as possible; let not your play demand belief for whatever [absurdities] it is inclinable [to exhibit]: nor take out of a witch's belly a living child that she had dined upon. The tribes of the seniors rail against every thing that is void of edification: the exalted knights disregard poems which are austere. He who joins the instructive with the agreeable, carries off every vote, by delighting and at the same time admonishing the reader. This book gains money for the Sosii; this crosses the sea, and continues to its renowned author a lasting duration.

Yet there are faults, which we should be ready to pardon: for neither does the string [always] form the sound which the hand and conception [of the performer] intends, but very often returns a sharp note when he demands a flat; nor will the bow always hit whatever mark it threatens. But when there is a great majority of beauties in a poem, I will not be offended with a few blemishes, which either inattention has dropped, or human nature has not sufficiently provided against. What therefore [is to be

determined in this matter]? As a transcriber, if he still commits the same fault though he has been reproved, is without excuse; and the harper who always blunders on the same string, is sure to be laughed at; so he who is excessively deficient becomes another Chœrilus; whom, when I find him tolerable in two or three places, I wonder at with laughter; and at the same time am I grieved whenever honest Homer grows drowsy? But it is allowable, that sleep should steal upon [the progress of] a king work.

As is painting, so is poetry: some pieces will strike you more if you stand near, and some, if you are at a greater distance: one loves the dark; another, which is not afraid of the critic's subtle judgment, chooses to be seen in the light; the one has pleased once, the other will give pleasure if ten times repeated.

O ye elder of the youths, though you are framed to a right judgment by your father's instructions, and are wise in yourself, yet take this truth along with you, [and] remember it; that in certain things a medium and tolerable degree of eminence may be admitted: a counselor and pleader at the bar of the middle rate is far removed from the merit of eloquent Messala, nor has so much knowledge of the law as Casselius Aulus, but yet he is in request; [but] a mediocrity in poets neither gods, nor men, nor [even] the booksellers' shops have endured. As at an agreeable entertainment discordant music, and muddy perfume, and poppies mixed with Sardinian honey give offense, because the supper

might have passed without them; so poetry, created and invented for the delight of our souls, if it comes short ever so little of the summit, sinks to the bottom. He who does not understand the game, abstains from the weapons of the Campus Martius: and the unskillful in the tennis-ball, the quoit, and the troques keeps himself quiet; lest the crowded ring should raise a laugh at his expense: notwithstanding this, he who knows nothing of verses presumes to compose. Why not! He is free-born, and of a good family; above all, he is registered at an equestrian sum of moneys, and clear from every vice. You, [I am persuaded,] will neither say nor do any thing in opposition to Minerva:^[48] such is your judgment, such your disposition. But if ever you shall write anything, let it be submitted to the ears of Metius [Tarpa], who is a judge, and your father's, and mine; and let it be suppressed till the ninth year, your papers being held up within your own custody. You will have it in your power to blot out what you have not made public: a word ice sent abroad can never return.

Orpheus, the priest and Interpreter of the gods, deterred the savage race of men from slaughters and inhuman diet; once said to tame tigers and furious lions: Amphion too, the builder of the Theban wall, was said to give the stones moon with the sound of his lyre, and to lead them whithersoever he would, by engaging persuasion. This was deemed wisdom of yore, to distinguish the public from private weal; things sacred from things profane; to prohibit a promiscuous commerce between the sexes; to give laws to

married people; to plan out cities; to engrave laws on [tables of] wood. Thus honor accrued to divine poets, and their songs. After these, excellent Homer and Tyrtæus animated the manly mind to martial achievements with their verses. Oracles were delivered in poetry, and the economy of life pointed out, and the favor of sovereign princes was solicited by Pierian^[49] strains, games were instituted, and a [cheerful] period put to the tedious labors of the day; [this I remind you of,] lest haply you should be ashamed of the lyric muse, and Apollo the god of song.

It has been made a question, whether good poetry be derived from nature or from art. For my part, I can neither conceive what study can do without a rich [natural] vein, nor what rude genius can avail of itself: so much does the one require the assistance of the other, and so amicably do they conspire [to produce the same effect]. He who is industrious to reach the wished-for goal, has done and suffered much when a boy; he has sweated and shivered with cold; he has abstained from love and wine; he who sings the Pythian strains, was a learner first, and in awe of a master. But [in poetry] it is now enough for a man to say of himself: “I make admirable verses: a murrain seize the hindmost: it is scandalous for me to be outstripped, and fairly to acknowledge that I am ignorant of that which I never learned.”

As a crier who collects the crowd together to buy his goods, so a poet rich in land, rich in money put out at interest,

invites flatterers to come [and praise his works] for a reward. But if he be one who is well able to set out an elegant table, and give security for a poor man, and relieve when entangled in gloomy law-suits; I shall wonder if with his wealth he can distinguish a true friend from false one. You, whether you have made, or intend to make, a present to any one, do not bring him full of joy directly to your finished verses: for then he will cry out, “Charming, excellent, judicious,” he will turn pale; at some parts he will even distill the dew from his friendly eyes; he will jump about; he will beat the ground [with ecstasy]. As those who mourn at funerals for pay, do and say more than those that are afflicted from their hearts; so the sham admirer is more moved than he that praises with sincerity. Certain kings are said to ply with frequent bumpers, and by wine make trial of a man whom they are sedulous to know whether he be worthy of their friendship or not. Thus, if you compose verses, let not the fox’s concealed intentions impose upon you.

If you had recited any thing to Quintilius, he would say, “Alter, I pray, this and this:” if you replied, you could do it no better, having made the experiment twice or thrice in vain; he would order you to blot out, and once more apply to the anvil your ill-formed verses: if you choose rather to defend than correct a fault, he spent not a word more nor fruitless labor, but you alone might be fond of yourself and your own works, without a rival. A good and sensible man will censure spiritless verses, he will condemn the rugged,

on the incorrect he will draw across a black stroke with his pen; he will lop off ambitious [and redundant] ornaments; he will make him throw light on the parts that are not perspicuous; he will arraign what is expressed ambiguously; he will mark what should be altered; [in short,] he will be an Aristarchus:^[50] he will not say, “Why should I give my friend offense about mere trifles?” These trifles will lead into mischiefs of serious consequence, when once made an object of ridicule, and used in a sinister manner.

Like one whom an odious plague or jaundice, fanatic phrensy or lunacy, distresses; those who are wise avoid a mad poet, and are afraid to touch him; the boys jostle him, and the incautious pursue him. If, like a fowler intent upon his game, he should fall into a well or a ditch while he belches out his fustian verses and roams about, though he should cry out for a long time, “Come to my assistance, O my countrymen;” not one would give himself the trouble of taking him up. Were any one to take pains to give him aid, and let down a rope; “How do you know, but he threw himself in hither on purpose?” I shall say: and will relate the death of the Sicilian poet. [Empedocles](#), while he was ambitious of being esteemed an immortal god, in cold blood leaped into burning Ætna.^[51] Let poets have the privilege and license to die [as they please]. He who saves a man against his will, does the same with him who kills him [against his will]. Neither is it the first time that he has behaved in this manner; nor, were he to be forced from his purposes, would he now become a man, and lay aside his

desire of such a famous death. Neither does it appear sufficiently, why he makes verses: whether he has defiled his father's ashes, or sacrilegiously removed the sad enclosure^[52] of the vindictive thunder: it is evident that he is mad, and like a bear that has burst through the gates closing his den, this unmerciful rehearser chases the learned and unlearned. And whomsoever he seizes, he fastens on and assassinates with recitation: a leech that will not quit the skin, till satiated with blood.^[53]

THE END.

1. [↑] All that our poet says here may be referred, in general, to three heads, the fable, the manners, and the diction. We should take notice that this piece particularly regards epic and dramatic poetry, and that our author only occasionally mentions any other kind.

The most important precept for the composition of a poem is unity and simplicity of design. There should be only one action, to which all the incidents ought to refer; and this point of perfection, every regular work requires. To show the necessity of this rule, Horace compares an irregular poem to pictures formed by a wild assortment of many parts entirely unlike each other. Every part, considered in itself may have its proper, natural perfection, while their union produces nothing but what is monstrous and ridiculous. FRAN.

The critic's rules must be taken either, 1. from the general standing laws of composition; or, 2. from the

peculiar ones, appropriated to the kind. Now the direction to be fetched from the former of these sources will of course precede, as well on account of its superior dignity, as that the mind itself delights to descend from universals to the consideration of particulars. Agreeably to this rule of nature, the poet, having to correct, in the Roman drama, these three points, 1. a misconduct in the disposition; 2. an abuse of language; and, 3. a disregard of the peculiar characters and colorings of its different species, hath chosen to do this on principles of universal nature; which, while they include the case of the drama, at the same time extend to poetic composition at large. These prefatory, universal observations being delivered, he then proceeds, with advantage, to the second source of this art, viz., the consideration of the laws and rules peculiar to the kind. HURD.

2. ↑ But Orelli more rightly treats "collatis membris" as the ablative absolute.
3. ↑ These preparatory observations, concerning the laws of poetic composition at large, have been thought to glance more particulaly at the epic poetry which was not improper: for, 1. the drama which he was about to criticise, had its rise and origin from the *epos*. Thus we are told by the great critic, that Homer was the first who invented dramatic imitations *μόνος—ὅτι μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησε*. 2. The several censures, here pointed at the epic, would bear still more directly against the tragic poem; it being more glaringly

inconsistent with the genius of the drama to admit of foreign and digressive ornaments, than of the extended, episodical *epopæia*. For both these reasons, it was altogether pertinent to the poet's purpose, in a criticism on the drama, to expose the vicious practice of the epic models. Though, to preserve the unity of his piece, and for a further reason (see note on v. 1), he hath artfully done this under the cover of general criticism. HURD.

4. ↑ Boughs of cypress were carried in funeral processions, and placed before the houses of the great, upon particular occasions of sorrow, *Et non plebeios luctus testata cupressus*. Lucan. From hence, perhaps, this tree was usually drawn in votive tablets; in pictures carried by beggars, to excite charity; and in those used by lawyers in courts of justice, to raise the compassion of the judges, by representing the distresses of their clients. A painter might, by frequent practice, excel in drawing a tree for which there was such demand; and he therefore absurdly determines to show his skill upon all occasions, even by painting it in the middle of the ocean, and making it overshadow the storm. The commentators understand this passage in a different manner. FRAN.
5. ↑ The word *prodigialiter* apparently refers to that fictitious monster, under which the poet allusively shadows out the idea of absurd and inconsistent composition. The application, however, differs in this, that, whereas the monster, there painted, was intended

to expose the extravagance of putting together incongruous parts, without any reference to a whole, this prodigy is designed to characterize a whole, but deformed by the ill-judged position of its parts. The former is like a monster, whose several members as of right belonging to different animals, could by no disposition be made to constitute one consistent animal. The other, like a landscape which hath no objects absolutely irrelative, or irreducible to a whole, but which a wrong position of the parts only renders prodigious. Send the boar to the woods, and the dolphin to the waves; and the painter might show them both on the same canvas.

Each is a violation of the law of unity, and a real monster: the one, because it contains an assemblage of natural incoherent parts; the other, because its parts, though in themselves coherent, are misplaced and disjointed. HURD.

6. ↑ "Unus"="præter cæteros," "melius quam reliqui omnes." ORELLI.

The reading before Bentley was "imus."

7. ↑ Literally, "shoulders," a phrase derived from wrestlers.
8. ↑ *Cinctutis*. Having the tunic tightened by the cinctus, or wearing the cinctus instead of the tunic, as appears to have been the custom of the ancient Romans. This was a vest which passed round the waist, and extended down to the feet. That it was an ancient vesture may appear from its being used by the Luperci. Comp.

Ovid. Fast. v. 101. As it did not embarrass the motion of the arms, even after the tunic became part of the dress, it was sometimes substituted for it by those who had occasion to use much bodily exertion. Hence *cinctutis* is supposed by some to have a meaning here similar to that of *succinctus*, “active, industrious.” Others explain the word as referring to that arrangement of the toga called “cinctus Gabinus.” M‘CAUL.

9. ↑ Agrippa opened a communication between the Lucrine and Avernian Lakes in 717, and built a magnificent haven there, which he named Portus Julius, in honor of Augustus, who was at that time only called Julius Octavianus. SAN.
10. ↑ The Scholiast informs us, that Agrippa opened a canal to receive the waters of the Tiber, which had overflowed the country.
11. ↑ This revival of old words is one of those niceties in composition, not to be attempted by any but great masters. It may be done two ways: 1. by restoring such terms as are grown entirely obsolete: or 2. by selecting out of those which have still a currency, and are not quite laid aside, such as are most forcible and expressive. These choice words, among such as are still in use, I take to be those which are employed by the old writers in some peculiarly strong and energetic sense, yet so as with good advantage to be copied by the moderns, without appearing barbarous or affected. (See Hor. lib. ii. ep. ii. v. 115.) The other use of old

terms, i. e. when become obsolete, he says, must be made *parcè*, more sparingly. HURD.

12. ↑ The purport of these lines (from v. 73 to 86), and their connection with what follows, hath not been fully seen. They would express this general proposition, “That the several kinds of poetry essentially differ from each other, as may be gathered, not solely from their different subjects, but their different measures ; which good sense, and an attention to the peculiar natures of each, instructed the great inventors and masters of them to employ. The use made of this proposition is to infer”, “That therefore the like attention should be had to the different species of the same kind of poetry (v. 89, etc.), as in the case of tragedy and comedy (to which the application is made), whose peculiar differences and correspondences, as resulting from the natures of each, should, in agreement to the universal law of decorum, be exactly known and diligently observed by the poet.” HURD.
13. ↑ Elegy was at first only a lamentation for the death of a person beloved, and probably arose from the death of Adonis. It was afterward applied to the joys and griefs of lovers. TORR.
14. ↑ The pentameter, which Horace calls “*exiguum*,” because it has a Toot less than the hexameter. For the same reason he says, “*versibua impariter junctis*.” DAC.

15. ↑ *Indignatur item*, etc.—*Cæna Thyesta*. “Il met le souper de Thyeste pour toutes sortes de tragedies,” says M. Dacier, with whom agrees the whole band of commentators: but why this subject should be singled out, as the representative of the rest, is nowhere explained by any of them. We may be sure, it was not taken up at random. The reason was, that the *Thyestes* of Ennius was peculiarly chargeable with the fault here censured; as is plain from a curious passage in the *Orator*, where Cicero, speaking of the loose numbers of certain poets, observes this, in particu. lar, of the tragedy of *Thyestes*, “*Similia sunt quædam apud nostros: velut in Thyeste*,

Quemnam te esse dicam? qui tardâ in senectute,

et quæ sequuntur: quæ, nisi cùm tibicen accesserit, oratione sunt solutæ simillimæ:” which character exactly agrees to this of Horace, wherein the language of that play is censured, as flat and prosaic, and hardly rising above the plain narrative of an ordinary conversation in comedy. This allusion to a particular play, written by one of their best poets, and frequently exhibited on the Roman stage, gives great force and spirit to the precept, at the same time that it exemplifies it in the happiest manner. It seems further probable to me, that the poet also designed an indirect compliment to Varius, whose *Thyestes* we are told (*Quintil. L. x. c. 1*) was not inferior to any tragedy of the Greeks. This double intention of these lines well

suited to the poet's general aim, which is seen through all his critical works, of beating down the excessive admiration of the old poets, and of asserting and advancing the just honors of the deserving moderns. It may further be observed, that the critics have not felt the force of the words *exponi* and *narrari* in this precept. They are admirably chosen to express the two faults condemned: the first implying a kind of pomp and ostentation in the language, which is therefore improper for the low subjects of comedy; and the latter, as I have hinted, a flat, prosaic expression, not above the cast of a common narrative, and therefore equally unfit for tragedy. HURD.

16. ↑ *Non satis est pulchra*, etc. Bentley objects to *pulchra* because this, he says, is a general term including under it every species of beauty, and therefore that of *dulcis* or the affecting. As if general terms were not frequently restrained and determined to a peculiar sense by the context. But the great critic did not sufficiently attend to the connection, which, as F. Robertellus, in his paraphrase on the epistle, well observes, stands thus: "It is not enough, that tragedies have that kind of beauty which arises from a pomp and splendor of diction, they must also be pathetic or affecting." HURD.
17. ↑ The connection lies thus: language must agree with character: character with fame, or at least with itself. HURD.

18. ↑ The rule is, as appears from the reason of the thing, and from Aristotle, “Let a uniformity of character be preserved, or at least a consistency:” *i. e.* either let the manners be exactly the same from the beginning to the end of the play, as those of Medea, for instance, and Orestes; or, if any change be necessary, let it be such as may consist with, and be easily reconciled to, the manners formerly attributed, as is seen in the case of Electra and Iphigenia. HURD.
19. ↑ *Difficile est proprie communia dicere.* Lambin’s comment is, “*Communia* hoc loco appellat Horatius argumenta fabularum à nullo adhuc tractata: et ita, quæ cuivis exposita sunt et iu medio quadammodo posita, quasi vacua et à nemine occupata.” And that this is the true meaning of *communia* is evidently fixed by the words *ignota indictaque*, which are explanatory of it HURD.
20. ↑ *Publica materies* is just the reverse of what the poet had before styled *communia*: the latter meaning such subjects or characters as, though by their nature left in common to all, had yet, in fact, not been occupied by any writer; the former, those which had already been made public by occupation. In order to acquire a property in subjects of this sort, the poet directs us to observe the three following cautions: 1. Not to follow the trite, obvious round of the original work; *i. e.* not servilely and scrupulously to adhere to its plan of method. 2. Not to be translators, instead of imitators, *i. e.* if it shall be thought fit to imitate more expressly

any part of the original, to do it with freedom and spirit, and without a slavish attachment to the mode of expression. 3. Not to adopt any particular incident that may occur in the proposed model, which either decency or the nature of the work would reject. HURD.

21. ↑ *Scriptor cyclicus*. Some author of the cyclus, described above, 1, 132.

*The chief Cyclic poems are the following: 1. τὰ Κύλρια, of Stasinus or Hegesinus. 2. The Αἰθιοπὶς of Arctinus. 3. The Ἰλίας μικρά by Lesches. 4. The Ἰλίου πέρσις of Arctinus. 5. The Νόστοι attributed to Agias. 6. The Τηλεγονία of Eugammon. These were collected, more for the sake of philology than poetry, by the Alexandrine grammarians. M'CAUL.

22. ↑ “Quærit”=“quæstus facit,” as in Virg. Georg. i. “In medium qiærebant.”
23. ↑ He returns to his first division of human life into two parts. “Anni venienteæ,” the years preceding manhood; “anni recedentes,” the years going back toward old age and death. The ancients reckoned the former by addition: the latter by subtraction. The French have an expression like this of “recedentes anni.” They say, “est sur son retour,” “he is upon his return,” when a person is declining in years. DAC.
24. ↑ *Semper in adjunctis*. “Adjuncta ævo,” every thing which attends age; “apta sevo,” every thing proper to it.
25. ↑ *Fecundia præsens*. The recital of an actor present, which ought to be made with all the pathetic;

“facundia;” or a recital instead of the action, “facundia facti vicaria, qua rem quæ oculia præsentera sistit.”
DAG.

26. ↑ The poet does not forbid a fourth person to speak, but would have him say very little, as the Scholiast understands the precept. Indeed, a conversation of three people is most agreeable, because it is less confused and less divides the attention of an audience.
RODELL.

27. ↑ The chorus was not introduced between the acts, merely to relieve the audience, but had a part in the play, and concurred with the other actors to carry on the plot, and support the probability of it. The Choriphæus, or first person of the chorus, entered in the acts, and spoke for all those of whom the chorus was composed; “officiumque virile defendat.” The chorus filled up the intervals of the acts with their songs, which were composed of reflections upon what was past, or their apprehensions of what might happen.
FRAN.

28. ↑ *Officiumque virile*. Heinsius takes *virile* adverbially, for *viriliter*. But this is thought harsh. What hinders, but that it may be taken adjectively? And then, agreeably to his interpretation, “officium virile” will mean a strenuous, diligent office, such as becomes a person interested in the progress of the action. The precept is leveled against the practice of those poets who, though they allow the part of a *persona dramatis* to the chorus, yet for the most part make it so idle and

insignificant a one, as is of little consequence in the representation; by which means the advantage of probability, intended to be drawn from this use of the chorus, is, in great measure, forfeited. HURD.

29. ↑ The chorus, says the poet, is to take the side of the good and virtuous; *i. e.* (see note on v. 193), is always to sustain amoral character. But this will need some explanation and restriction. To conceive aright of its office, we must suppose the chorus to be a number of persons, by some probable cause assembled together, as witnesses and spectators of the great action of the drama. Such persons, as they can not be wholly uninterested in what passes before them, will very naturally bear some share in the representation. This will principally consist in declaring their sentiments, and indulging their reflections freely on the several events and distresses as they shall arise. Thus we see the moral attributed to the chorus, will be no other than the dictates of plain sense; such as must be obvious to every thinking observer of the action, who is under the influence of no peculiar partialities from affection or interest. Though even these may be supposed, in cases where the character toward which they draw is represented as virtuous.

A chorus, thus constituted, must always, it is evident, take the part of virtue; because this; s the natural, and almost necessary determination of mankind, in all ages and nations, when acting freely and unconstrained. HURD.

30. ↑ I read “pacare tumentes,” with Bentley, Orelli, and others.
31. ↑ The Choriphæus was present through the whole play, and was often necessarily intrusted with the secrets of the persons of the drama. To preserve the probability, the poets chose a chorus, that was obliged by their own interest to keep those secrets, and without acting contrary to their duty. Euripides hath greatly offended against this precept. DAC.
32. ↑ *Tibia non ut nunc orichalco*, etc. (From v. 202 to v. 220.) This is one of those many passages in the epistle about which the critics have said a great deal, without explaining any thing. In support of what I mean to offer, as the true interpretation, I observe,
- I. That the poet’s intention certainly was, not to censure the false refinements of their stage music; but, in a short digressive history (such as the didactic form will sometimes require), to describe the rise and progress of the true. This I collect, 1. From the expression itself, which can not, without violence, be understood in any other way. For, as to the words *licentia* and *præceps*, which have occasioned much of the difficulty, the first means a freer use, not a licentiousness properly so-called; and the other only expresses a vehemence and rapidity of language, naturally productive of a quicker elocution, such as must of course attend the more numerous harmony of the lyre: not, as M. Dacier translates it, “une éloquence temeraire et outree,” an extravagant straining and

affectation of style. 2. From the reason of the thing, which makes it incredible that the music of the theater should then be most complete, when the times were barbarous, and entertainments of this kind little encouraged or understood. 3. From the character of that music itself; for the rudeness of which, Horace, in effect, apologizes, in defending it only on the score of the imperfect state of the stage, and the simplicity of its judges. This then being clear, I observe,

II That those two verses,

“Indoctus quid enim saperet liberque laborum,
Rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto ?”

are, as they now stand, utterly inexplicable. This hath appeared long since, from the fruitless labors of the critics, and, above all, of Lambin, one of the best of them, who, after several repeated efforts to elucidate this place, leaves it just as dark and unintelligible as he found it. The interpretation, without them, stands thus: “The tibia,” says the poet, “was at first low and simple. The first, as best agreeing to the then state of the stage, which required only a soft music to go along with and assist the chorus, there being no large and crowded theaters to fill in those days. And the latter, as suiting best to the then state of the times, whose simplicity and frugal manners exacted the severest temperance, as in every thing else, so in their dramatic ornaments and decorations. But, when conquest had enlarged the territory and widened the walls of Rome, and, in consequence thereof, a social spirit had dispelled that

severity of manners, by the introduction of frequent festival solemnities, then, as was natural to expect, a freer and more varied harmony took place. And thus it was, that the *tibicen*, the musician who played to the declamation in the acts, instead of the rude and simpler strain of the old times, gave a richness and variety of tone; and instead of the old inactive posture, added the grace of motion to his art. Just in the same manner,” continues he, “it happened to the lyre, *i. e.* the music in the chorus, which originally, as that of the *tibia*, was severe and simple; but, by degrees, acquired a quicker and more expressive modulation, such as corresponded to the more elevated and passionate turn of the poet’s style, and the diviner enthusiasm of his sentiment.”
HURD.

33. ↑ *Accessit numerisque modisque licentia major*. M. Dacier is out again, when he takes *licentia major* in a bad sense, as implying “lasciveté,” a culpable and licentious refinement. The license here spoken of, with regard to numbers and sounds, like that in another place, which respects words (1. 51), is one of those which is allowed, when *sumpta pudenter*. The comparative *major*, which is a palliative, shows this ; and is further justified by a like passage in Cicero de Oratore (I. iii. c. 48), where, speaking of this very license in poetry, he observes, that out of the heroic and iambic measure, which was at first strictly observed, there arose by degrees the anapæst, “*procerior quidam numerus, et ille licentior et divitior*

dithyrambus;” evidently not condemning this change, but opposing it to the rigorous and confined measures of the elder poet. But the expression itself occurs in the piece entitled “Orator,” in which, comparing the freedoms of the poetical and oratorical style, “in eâ” (*i. e. poeticâ*), says he, “*licentiam statuo majorem esse, quum in nobis faciendorum jungendorumque verborum.*” The poet says this license extended “*numeris modisque,*” the former of which words will express that license of meter spoken of by Cicero, and which is further explained, v. 256, etc., where an account is given of the improvement of the iambic verse. HURD.

34. ↑ *Sic priscæ—arti tibicen, etc.—Sic fidibus etiam, etc.* This is the application of what hath been said, in general, concerning the refinement of theatrical music to the case of tragedy. Some commentators say, and to comedy. But in this they mistake, as will appear presently, M. Dacier hath I know not what conceit about a comparison betwixt the Roman and Greek stage. His reason is, that the lyre was used in the Greek chorus, as appears, he says, from Sophocles playing upon this instrument himself in one of his tragedies. And was it not used too in the Roman chorus, as appears from Nero’s playing upon it in several tragedies? But the learned critic did not apprehend this matter. Indeed, from the caution with which his guides, the dealers in antiquities, always touch this point, it should seem that they too had no very clear conception

of it. The case I take to have been this: the tibia, as being most proper to accompany the declamation of the acts, *cantanti sticcinere*, was constantly employed, as will in the Roman tragedy as comedy. This appears from many authorities. I mention only two from Cicero. “Quam multa (Acad. 1. ii. 7) quæ nos fugiunt in cantu, exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati: Qui, primo inflatu tibicinis, Antiopam esse aiunt aut Audromachem, cum nos ne suspicemur quidem.” The other is still more express. In his piece entitled “Orator,” speaking of the negligence of the Roman writers in respect of numbers, he observes, that there were even many passages in their tragedies, which, unless the tibia played to them, could not be distinguished from mere prose: “quæ nisi cum tibicen accesserit, orationi sint solutæ simillima.” One of these passages is expressly quoted from Thyestes, a tragedy of Ennius, and, as appears from the measure, taken out of one of the acts. It is clear, then, that the tibia was certainly used in the declamation of tragedy. But now the song of the tragic chorus, being of the nature of the ode, of course required *fides*, the lyre, the peculiar and appropriated instrument of the lyric muse. And this is clearly collected, if not from express testimonies, yet from some occasional hints dropped by the ancients. For, 1. The lyre we are told (Cic. de Leg. ii. 9 and 15), and is agreed on all hands, was an instrument of the Roman theater; but it was not employed in comedy. This we certainly know from the

short accounts of the music prefixed to Terrence's plays. 2. Further, the *tibicen*, as we saw, accompanied the declamation of the acts in tragedy. It remains, then, that the proper place of the lyre was, where one should naturally look for it, in the songs of the chorus; but we need not go further than this very passage for a proof It is unquestionable, that the poet is here speaking of the chorus only, the following lines not admitting any other possible interpretation. By *fidibus*, then, it is necessarily understood the instrument peculiarly used in it. In this view, the whole digression is more pertinent and connects better. The poet had before been speaking of tragedy. All his directions, from l. 100, respect this species of the drama only. The application of what he had said concerning music is then most naturally made, 1. To the *tibia*, the music of the acts; and, 2. To *fides*, that of the choir: thus confining himself, as the tenor of this part required, to tragedy only. Hence is seen the mistake, not only of M. Dacier, whose comment is in every view insupportable; but, as was hinted, of Heinsius, Lambin, and others, who, with more probability, explained this of the Roman tragedy and comedy. For, though *tibia* might be allowed to stand for comedy, as opposed to *tragædia* (as, in fact, we find it in II. Ep. 1. 98), that being the only instrument employed in it; yet, in speaking expressly of the music of the stage, *fides* could not determinately enough, and in contradistinction to *tibia*, denote that of tragedy, it being an instrument used solely or

principally in the chorus, of which the context shows, he alone speaks. It is further to be observed, that in the application here made, besides the music, the poet takes in the other improvements of the tragic chorus, these happening, as from the nature of the thing they must, at the same time. HURD.

35. ↑ *Sententia Delphis*. *Sententia* is properly an aphorism taken from life, briefly representing either what is or what ought to be the conduct of it: “Oratio sumpta de vita, quæ aut quid sit aut quid esse oporteat in vita, breviter ostendit.” (Ad Herenn. Rhet. 1. iv.) These aphorisms are here mentioned, as constituting the peculiar praise and beauty of the chorus. This is finely observed, and was intended to convey an oblique censure on the practice of those poets, who stuff out every part of the drama alike with moral sentences, not considering that the only proper receptacle of them is the chorus, where indeed they have an extreme propriety, it being the peculiar office and character of the chorus to moralize. HURD.
36. ↑ There was a kind of tragic comedies among the Greeks, which they called Satyrs, because the chorus was formed of Satyrs, who sung the praises of Bacchus between the acts, and said a thousand low pleasantries. The only piece of this kind remaining to us is the Cyclops of Euripides, in which Ulysses is the principal actor. The Romans, in imitation of the Greek Satyrs, had their *Atettanæ*, so called from *Atella*, the city where they were first played. NAN.

37. ↑ *Potus et exlex*. The lines,

“Indoctus quid enim saperet liberque laborum
Rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto ?”

were I observed, certainly misplaced. They should, I think, come in here, where their sense is extremely pertinent. The poet had been speaking of the satyric drama, which, says he, was added to the tragic,

“eò quòd

Illecebris erat, et grata novitate morandus

Spectator, functusque sacris, et potus, et
exlex.”

But why, it might be asked, this compliance, in so false a taste, with a drunken, lawless rabble ? The answer is natural and to the purpose. “Because their theaters necessarily consisted of a mixed assembly, every part of which was to be considered in the public diversions.” The question then hath an extreme propriety,

“Indoctus quid enim saperet liberque laborum,
Rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto ?”

The *rusticus* and *turpis* demanded the satyric piece. It was the necessary result of this mixture ; as, to gratify the better sort, the *urbanus* and *honestus*, the tragic drama was exhibited. It is some prejudice in favor of this conjecture, that it explains to us, what would otherwise appear very strange, that such gross ribaldry, as we know the Atellanes consisted of, could ever be endured by the politest age of Rome. But scenical representations being then intended, not as in our days,

for the entertainment of the better sort, but on certain great solemnities, indifferently for the diversion of the whole city, it became necessary to consult the taste of the multitude, as well as of those, *quibus esl equus et pater et res*. HURD.

38. ↑ This proves that the same actor, as M. Dacier observes, who had been an Orestes or Ulysses in the tragic part, played the same character in the comic, or, *Atellanæ*. Thus Plautus in the prologue to his *Menechmes*, “this town, during this play, shall be Epidamnum, and when it has been acted, it may be any other city. As in a company of players, the same person shall, at different times, be a pander, a youth, an old man, a beggar, a king, a parasite, a soothsayer.” St. Jerome hath finely imitated this passage ; “our vices oblige us to play many characters, for every vice wears a different mask. Thus in a theater, the same person plays a robust and nervous Hercules, a dissolute Venus, and a furious Cyclops.” FRAN.
39. ↑ *Indigna tragædia versus*. Horace means the *Atellanæ*, which were in so much esteem, that the persons, who acted in them, were not ranked with the comedians, nor were obliged to unmask on the stage when they played ill, as others were ; and, as a peculiar honor, they were allowed to enlist in the army. Therefore low and trivial veraca were beneath the dignity of the *Atellanæ*. DAG.
40. ↑ Young women were usually chosen to dance in honor of the gods, but in some festivals, as in that of

the great goddess, the pontiffs obliged married women to dance. Hence the poet says *jussa*. DAC.

41. ↑ *Dominantia verba*. What the Greeks call *κύρια*, as if they were masters of the thing they would express ; as we say in English, “calling things by their proper names.” FRAN.
42. ↑ This precept (from v. 240 to 244) is analogous to that before given (v. 129) concerning tragedy. It directs to form the Satyrs out of a known subject. The reasons are, in general, the same for both. Only one seems peculiar to the Satyrs. For, the cast of them being necessarily romantic, and the persons those fantastic beings called satyrs, the *τὸ ὅμοιον*, or probable, will require the subject to have gained a popular belief, without which the representation must appear unnatural. Now, these subjects which have gained a popular belief, in consequence of old tradition, and their frequent celebration in the poets, are what Horace calls *nota* ; just as newly invented subjects, or, which comes to the same thing, such as had not been employed by other writers, *indicia*, he, on a like occasion, terms *ignota*. The connection lies thus. Having mentioned Silenus in v. 239, one of the commonest characters in this drama, an objection immediately offers itself; “But what good poet will engage in subjects and characters so trite and hackneyed ?” The answer is, “ex noto fictum carmen sequar,” *i. e.* however trite and well known this and some other characters, essential to the Satyr, are and

must be ; yet will there be still room for fiction and genius to show itself. The conduct and disposition of the play may be wholly new, and above the ability of common writers, “tantum series juncturaque poilet.”
HURD.

43. ↑ Quibus est equus, etc., the knights who have a horse, kept at public expense; “quibusest pater,” people of birth, patricians; “quibus eat res,” they who have wealth, and are therefore distinguished from knights and patricians. DAC.
44. ↑ The iambic yields only the odd places to the spondee, the first, third, and fifth, but preserves the second, fourth, and sixth for itself. This mixture renders the verse more noble, and it may be still *trimeter*, the second foot being iambic. The comic poets, better to disguise their verse, and make it appear more like common conversation, inverted the tragic order, and put spondees in the even places. DAC.
45. ↑ Ironically spoken.
46. ↑ *Thespis*. A native of Icarius, a village in Attica, to whom the invention of the drama has been ascribed. Before his time there were no performers except the chorus. He led the way to the formation of a dramatic plot and language, by directing a pause in the performance of the chorus, during which he came forward and recited with gesticulation a mythological story. Comp. note Epist. ii. 1. 163. M'CAUL The date is thus given by the Par. Chron. Boeck.: Ἀφ' οὗ Θέσπις ὁ ποιητής [ἐφύνη] πρῶτος ὃς ἐδίδαξε [δρ]ᾱ[μα ἐν ᾗ]στ[ει

καί ἐ]τέθη ὁ [τ]ράγοος [ἄθρον] ἔτη ΗΗΠ[ΔΔ] – ἄρχοντος Ἀθ[ήνησι] ... ναίου τοῦ προτέρου. "Quod ad annum attinet, consistendum sane in Olymp. 61, eiusque tribus prioribus annis." Boeck. in Chr. WHEELER.

47. ↑ *Vel qui prætexas, vel qui docuere togatas.* There hath been much difficulty here in settling a very plain point. The question is, whether *prætexas* means tragedy or a species of comedy. The answer is very clear from Diomedes, whose account is, in short, this: "*Togatæ* is a general term for all sorts of Latin plays adopting the Roman customs and dresses; as *Palliatæ* for all adopting the Grecian. Of the *Togatæ*, the several species are, 1. *Prætexta* or *prætextata*, in which the Roman kings or generals were introduced, and is so called because the *prætexta* was the distinguishing habit of such persons; 2. *Tabernaria*, frequently called *Togata*, though that word, as we have seen, had properly a larer sense. 3. *Atellana*. 4. *Planipedis*." He next marks the difference of these several sorts of the *Togatæ* from the similar corresponding ones of the *Palliatæ*, which are these: 1. "Tragœdia, absolutely so styled. 2. Comœdia. 3. Satyri. 4. Μῖμος. (These four sorts of the *Palliatæ* were also probably in use at Rome; certainly, at least, the two former.) It appears then fromth ence, that *prætextata* was properly the Roman tragedy. But he adds, "*Togata prætextata à tragœdiâ differt*;" and it is also said. "*to be only like tragedy, tragœdiæ similis*." What is this

difference and this likeness? The explanation follows. "Heroes are introduced into tragedy, such as Orestes, Chryses, and the like. In the *prætextata*, Brutus, Decius, or Marcellus." So then we see when Græcian characters were introduced, it was called simply *tragædia*; when Roman, *prætextata*; yet both, tragedies. The sole difference lay in the persons being foreign or domestic. The correspondence in every other respect was exact. The same is observed of the Roman comedy; when it adopted Greek characters, it was called *comædia*; when Roman, *togata tabernaria*, or *togata*, simply. HURD.

48. ↑ *Invitâ—Minervâ*. Cicero, de Off. i. 31, explains this phrase; "adversante et repugnante naturâ." And yet the meaning here is not very evident. Does Horace say that young Piso will neither do nor say any thing contrary to his natural endowments; implying that he will not attempt poetry, as his abilities are inadequate? Or does he mean to compliment him on his capabilities, by saying that there is nothing which he will attempt, in which genius will not favor and assist him? The latter appears to be the correct interpretation. Thus the obvious meaning of *invitâ Minervâ* is—Minerva refusing her assistance, or discountenancing the attempt: and the interpretation—natural endowments refusing their assistance, or marring the effort.
49. ↑ *i.e.* strains of the muses, surnamed Pierides
50. ↑ Aristachus was a critic, who wrote above four score volumes of comments on the Greek poets. His

criticisms on [Homer](#) were so much esteemed, that no line was thought genuine until he had acknowledged it. He was surnamed the prophet or diviner, for his sagacity. FRAN.

51. ↑ *Ardentem frigidus Ætnam insiluit.* "In cold blood, deliberately." Horace, by playing on the words *ardentem frigidus*, would show that he did not believe the story, and told it as one of the traditions, which poets may use without being obliged to vouch the truth of them. The pleasantry continues, when he says, it is murder to hinder a poet from killing himself; a maxim, which could not be said seriously. SAN.
52. ↑ *An triste bidental* What crime must that man have committed whom the gods in vengeance have possessed with a madness of writing verses? *Bidental* was a place struck with lightning, which the aruspices purified and consecrated with a sacrifice of a sheep, *bidental*. It was an act of sacrilege ever to remove the bounds of it, *movere bidental*. FRAN.
53. ↑ In concluding the annotations on the Art of Poetry, I must beg to recommend to the reader's notice my translation of [Aristotle's Poetic](#), with a collection of notes, as the two treatises contribute to each other's illustration in the fullest extent.
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